

Heidi Welch Named 2013 New Hampshire Teacher Of The Year

Commissioner of Education Virginia M. Barry, Ph.D., announced that Heidi Welch, a music teacher at Hillsboro-Deering High School, is the 2013 New Hampshire Teacher of the Year. In receiving this award, Ms. Welch becomes New Hampshire's candidate for National Teacher of the Year.

"Selecting a Teacher of the Year is an exceptional way to celebrate the many outstanding and dedicated people teaching in New Hampshire schools," said Commissioner Barry. "The NH Teacher of the Year isn't the best teacher in the State, but is chosen to represent the many excellent teachers devoted to the highest level of student learning in their classrooms. Heidi will serve as a leader and ambassador for all the outstanding teachers in NH."

Heidi Welch has been teaching for sixteen years, the last fourteen at Hillsboro-Deering High School. The selection committee recognized her passion for education, the excitement she brings to the classroom and her ability to reach every student. She possesses boundless commitment to support and guide the successes of her students. She realizes that literacy is the key to being truly free and strives to engage students in this pursuit through music. Literacy through music means that her students study American history in the context of the music of people's lives and the times, that students read the plays to which they are performing the scores, and that reading is fundamental but literacy means so much more.

Heidi wrote in her application, "I knew that education was the key to a door that would lead me out of a life of poverty and fear and into a life of freedom and opportunity. I entered [college] with the dreams of becoming a British Literature teacher, but within only a few weeks, I found the pull of being a music teacher too much to ignore. I knew that if music education allowed me to find myself as a student, instilled in me a passion for the arts and for learning, and gave me a chance to push myself in ways that I never thought possible, that it would surely do the same for other young people trying to find where they fit. I would give them a chance to learn, to express themselves, and most of all to find a safe place to call home for a few hours a day: a space where they belonged, were part of a group that was achieving excellence, and learned valuable life lessons along the way. I may be a music educator, but I stress the educator first, and education in my mind begins with the ability to read. Literacy in and through the arts is a passion for me and will continue to be. Though music is my filter, literacy is my ultimate goal, because my message to my students will continue to emulate Fredrick Douglass's words from long ago. When you can read AND WRITE you are truly free, and through music education everyone can find a way to sing.

Her principal Jim O'Rourke said, "Heidi continually looks for ways to improve student learning and motivation in her classroom. She has strong educational values, high expectations, and demands excellence of every student. Her leadership style and caring nature in working with students and parents is exceptional. I have observed her interactions with many students, parents, teachers, and administrators and she presents herself in a respectful and professional manner."

New Hampshire Teacher of the Year Finalists are: Gail Boucher a third grade teacher at Auburn Village School, Deborah Dixon an early intervention teacher for grades K-2 at Inter-Lakes Elementary School in Meredith, Margaret Horan a 5/6 grade teacher at Pine Tree Elementary School in Center Conway, and Ryan O'Connor an American Literature teacher at Windham High School.

In New Hampshire, Hannaford Supermarkets is proud to partner with the Department of Education to sponsor the New Hampshire Teacher of the Year program. As a company, Hannaford is committed to enriching the quality of life in the communities they serve. One way to do this is by supporting the Teacher of the Year Program that recognizes the significant contributions made by the many dedicated professionals who choose to make teaching their calling.

Each year, New Hampshire schools take part in the State and National Teacher of the Year Program. The National Teacher of the Year Program, sponsored by the ING Foundation and Target, is a project of the Council of Chief State School Officers, in partnership with the University of Phoenix Foundation and People to People Ambassador Programs. The National Teacher of the Year Program began in 1952 and continues as the oldest, most prestigious national honors program that focuses public attention on excellence in teaching.

In early December, these finalists and the 2013 NH Teacher of the Year will be invited to a "Leadership in Education Banquet" to celebrate their accomplishments along with other distinguished educators in the State. At this banquet they will receive a classroom grant from Hannaford Supermarkets.

The selection process for the 2013 NH Teacher of the Year program was coordinated by a committee including: Hannaford Supermarkets D6 Retail Operations Support Specialist, Jean-Marie Beauchemin; NH State Board of Education member, Cindy Chagnon; Ginny Clifford, Bureau of Credentialing, NH Department of Education; NH Association of School Principals Executive Director, Peggy McAllister; 2012 NH Teacher of the Year, Bethany Bernasconi; and 2009 NH Teacher of the Year, Deb Fogg.

For more information about this and other award/recognition programs coordinated through the Department of Education log on to www.education.nh.gov/recognition/index.htm or contact Lori Temple, Public Information Officer at (603) 271-6646 or e-mail Lori.Temple@doe.nh.gov.

To contact Hillsboro-Deering High School please call (603) 464-1130.

Every day a New Hampshire teacher makes a difference in the life of a child. Every year the NH Department of Education honors outstanding teachers who make their communities, profession, and the world a better place.